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Ceramic Murals

by

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Submitted:

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PREFACE

In my Thesis I propose to study the Ceramic Murals at its beginning and at the present Age. Since it is a very wide and long topic to be handled by one person within a limited time, I shall confine myself to the first attempts of Mankind in the making of Murals in clay in Prehistoric times, in Mesopotamia and murals that are done very recently , mainly in the United States.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION

For many thousands of years our knowledge of mankind has been derived from the surviving works of Art executed in numerous methods, manners, and materials, before and since the invention of writing. Whatever the materials, methods and manners are, the works of Art are the products of an instinctive force and aesthetic impulse of individuals. The essential nature of Art lies in the artist's capacity to create a synthetic and self-contained world, compounded of practical needs and desires of dreams and imagination, in order to represent his experience, knowledge and perception of some aspect of universal truth.

However, we must bear in mind that although Art is a solitary activity, an artist is a part of society. He is influenced by economic, religious and philosophical conceptions of his society. No individual can arrive at the threshold of his potentialities without a culture in which he participates, and no civilization has in it any element which in the last analysis is not the contribution

of an individual. This delicate relationship between the artist and the society weaves the patterns of cultures, upon which my studies of Ceramic murals will be based. Ceramic murals, which are a form of Art in themselves, will serve as a means for my deepest aspiration: a deeper understanding of Mankind.

DEFINITION OF A MURAL

Before entering into a minute study, it is necessary to clarify the preliminary question about the heading. What do we mean by Ceramic murals?

A mural, in its most simple definition, is a treatment of a wall either executed on or affixed to it. This treatment of a wall can be carried by infinite materials and methods for practical or aesthetic reasons. A wall is an upright work done with building materials to enclose or divide a space, or to support a building. Its upright plain, blank surface has been a provocation for Mankind. In order to make it alive, man has attempted to break that blank surface by adding a human touch.

Since my topic is Ceramic Murals, I shall confine myself to the treatment of the walls done only in clay. These treatments can be carried out by moulding, carving, sculpting, by cutting and attaching or by applying colorants and glazes on or in the clay.

THE FIRST ATTEMPTS OF MANKIND IN MAKING MURALS

The first discovery of the cave-paintings in 1880, in Spain, and the other following discoveries have thrown a very valuable light upon the beginnings of Art.

•

The highly developed aesthetic qualities of these paintings caused trouble to anthropologists and to sociologists, and aroused the interest of the society as well. Man, having a deep curiosity and desire to know himself began to ask questions about the reasons that caused the cavemen to make these paintings. The questions are few but the answers are many in the attempt to solve them. According to the studies and observations of famous anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists, cave paintings came into reality:

- a) for practical reasons
- b) for religious reasons
- c) for 'fear of a vacuum'
- d) for aesthetic impulse

Whatever the answers are, it has been agreed that

Art has been one of the primary activities of human beings. There are two factors in every artistic situation: the will of an individual and the requirements of a community.

With this in mind, we shall begin to study the primitive man and his society to see how much truth lies in the above observations, and try to understand the factors that drew Mankind into the field of Art.

Primitive Art, which is a very vast, long subject, covering many areas, will be dealt with very precisely. It will cover only the attempts made by the primitive man who lived in the Franco-Cantabria area, that is in France and Spain, during the Upper Paleolithic period, between 30,000 - 10,000 B.C.

These primitive people are called Cro-Magnon, who derived their names from the Cro-Magnon cave in Dordogne, France, where typical remains of them were discovered. They were tall, broad-shouldered people, with high fore-

heads and well developed chins. Their clothes were made of animal skins sewn together. They knew how to make fire is affirmed from the evidence of the enormous hearths that were found. They were hunters and their religion was magical. Because of their religion and fear of animals, they formed communities.

How did the paintings come into reality?

This question can be enlightened partially by observing the development of the artistic faculty of children. " As soon as a child is able to hold a pencil and paper, he will merely make strokes and scratches in the beginning, then lines and circles will follow. Gradually through the maze of lines a child will recognize representations of objects or people. A similar development in the art of prehistoric man can be traced in the same manner"¹ At the caves of Gargas and Altamira tracings and circles made by the fingers of primitive man have been found, on the clayey surfaces of the caves. Among

1. Herbert Read Art And Society P. 12-13

these disorderly lines one can see the resemblances of animal heads. Once primitive man saw the resemblance of images which occupied his mind, he began to improve his scratches until he reached an exact representation of his mental impression.

Also formations and markings on the surfaces of rocks might have suggested animals to the primitive, man and might have facilitated the beginning in rendering these images. Many animal drawings have been found around these juttings or projections on the rocks which also gave a plastic relief to the drawings beside facilitating the job of drawing. In this way, primitive man, through the mass of lines and mediocre drawings, worked his way to the climax in rendering paintings of animals with highly aesthetic qualities, as can be seen in the caves of Lascaux and Altamira.

The theory of the " chance origin" of Art has other evidences from the above stated ones, given by anthropologists on their observations of primitive societies living at the present age. These observations seem logical

and true, but since men are dealing with a period of 20,000 years ago, it is difficult to say that this is the only truth, more excavations and more studies may reveal to us other truths than the above.

Since it seems most logical, we shall assume that the origin of Art came into reality by chance. Now another question arises in our minds: What were the reasons that made the primitive man keep on going in the practice of Art? Although it has been stated that aesthetic impulse is a constant activity and characteristic of Mankind, these reasons alone are not sufficient. There must be other reasons.

Primitive man, like the present age man, had a curiosity about the manifestations of Nature, reality and unreality and about Life and Death. We shall now study to how primitive man thought and what were his notions about Life. Primitive man, having an intellect which had not been mature and developed as the present age man, was incapable of separating the reality from the unreality. The world for him was dark, cruel, and

secret. Being incapable of understanding the manifestations of Nature, he believed in supernatural spirits. For him every reality, every influence was mystic and and consequently every perception too. He, being primarily a hunter, depended for his food on animals. But he was not merely pre-occupied and frightened by the the animal itself, but also frightened by the unseen soul of the animal. So his fear, his belief, and his pursuit of animals for his food imprinted a vivid image of animals in his brain. Through this strong image he moulded and painted animals in the dark corners of the caves, mainly to have a magical power. He put holes or drew darts on these paintings by which he wanted to destroy the soul of the animal before it was bodily killed.

However, his fear, his practical reasons and his religion were still not sufficient answers to those paintings and mouldings which had high aesthetic qualities. It can be only solved by adding that primitive man had a desire to paint effeciently. It was even suggested anthropologists that a school of painting existed in

primitive societies, otherwise it is hard to believe that those paintings came into reality after trial and error. Also when we compare the paintings in Franco-Cantabrian with the ones belonging to other areas we are amazed at the high qualities that those paintings carry. Although the possibility of those schools have not been verified yet, it is true to say that the primitive man of Cantabrian area had a capacity of sensing the aesthetic values of art.

Through his ability to draw, primitive artists had acquired the highest rank and prestige given to a magician. He was honored and respected by his society. Even one anthropologist had written that " when a man was born with a twisted umbilicalcord around his throat he was considered to be a future artist in his society" ² That shows the importance of an artist in primitive societies with a touch of mysticism in the background. These were the few among many relationships between the artist and his society in prehistoric times, which shows us the importance of the artists at that time.

2. Herbert Read Art and Society P.15

The primitive Art, on the whole, is organic, vital and sensuous. The representations of animals are most of the time in motion. First it was linear stylisations of animals drawn with fingers on the clayey surfaces or with sharp stones on the harder surfaces of the rocks. Then he moulded the clay on the surfaces of the cave-walls to render the forms of the animals, then, with the use of colors, of dark and light shades, he gave a more realistic aspect to his representations.

The study on the Beginning of Art which goes back to the prehistoric times has given us very illuminating points for our subject. We have discovered once more that Clay has been one of the primary materials, if not the first, in rendering works of Art, because of its plasticity and easiness in finding it everywhere. Secondly, we also discovered that the primitive man, by using the surfaces of the walls in caves for representations of animals, he had planted the seeds of the Mural Art, Although he may not have realized it.

Unfortunately, the animal forms done in clay on the

walls, did not survive up to our Age, because of its weak character and easy breakage if not fired. However, I would like to show and mention some of them which survived against weather and destruction.

Picture 1

This picture shows a maze of lines and a bull's head done in the clayey surface of a cave wall in Altamira, Spain. It visualizes the story how the primitive man ran his fingers haphazardly on the clay till he came to a close resemblance of an animal's head and realizing what had occurred, he continued to improve it till he made a final resemblance of a bull's head.

Picture 2

It shows an improved stage of Art of the primitive man in rendering representations of animals. It is a bison's head engraved in clay in a cave-wall at Niaux, France.

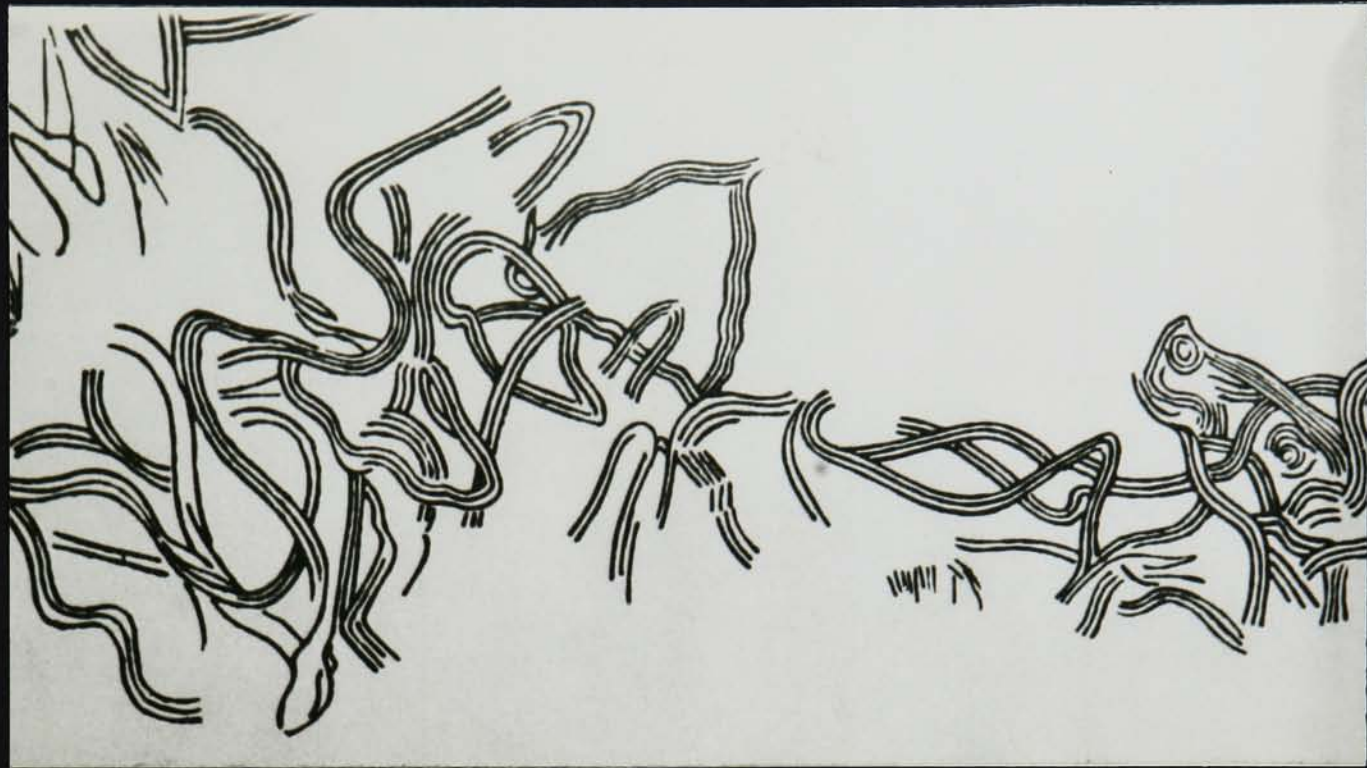
Picture 3

It shows how primitive man by carving the outlines of the animal design began grasping the idea of sculpture. It is bison, sculptured in clay, on a cave-wall at Tuc- d'Auboubert, France.

Picture 4

Shows us that by piercing holes in to the body of an animal, primitive man tried to acquire power by magic before capturing that animal. It is a horse traced in clay on a cave-wall at Montespan, France.

Although the samples of animal representations done in clay on the cave-walls are few, they are sufficient enough to give an idea of the primitive art and also the first treatments of the walls.



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4

PART II

DAWN OF THE MURAL ART

Now, we have passed into a civilization, Mesopotamia, in which we shall study the conscious indulgence of Mankind in rendering Mural Art.

Etymologically, Mesopotamia signifies " a land between the Rivers "; culturally, it covers a much wider area. It overlaps both sides of the great waterways, the Euphrates and the Tigres, which both spring from East Minor Asia and flow down into the Persian Gulf. It covers a vast plain, some 600 miles in length, extending from the mountains of Armenia on the North, to the Persian Gulf on the South, and extending westwards to the Syro-Arabian desert. To the East it is bounded by the Iranian highlands.

This rich, exceptionally fertile, soil has enjoyed an abundance of sunlight and water even at the beginning of the history. So it was an ideal region of the world to be occupied at a very early date. Because of its rich soil, it forms the part of the so called " The Fertile Crescent"³, a given

3 Edward Mc Nall Burns " Western Civilizations" p.28

name to that wide belt of productive land which begins from the Persian Gulf, going upwards and following the Mediterreanean, enters into the land of Egypt.

By entering into the Mesopotamian civilization, we also enter into a new period of Mankind. The Paleolithic period ends and gives its way to Neolithic period. That is to say, with the emergence of the Agrarian Empires Man enters into History, and becomes a cultivator, leaving the phase of being a hunter. He begins to make dwellings, cultivates the land and domesticates the animals. The reason of this change in the History of Man is due to the climatic changes primarily, when animals such as : reindeer, bison, bulls and mammoth began migrating to the North left man to search for other means to find his food. And this period which is called Neolithic, comes into view around 10,000 B.C., with the end of the Upper Paleolithic period.

MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION

The pioneers in the development of the Mesopotamian civilization were people known as the Sumerians, who settled in the lower area of Mesopotamia between 5,000 and 4,000 B.C. Their precise origin is unknown but they seem to have come from Central Asia. They spoke a language unrelated to any now known, although their culture bore a certain resemblance to the earliest civilization of India.⁴ Mesopotamian civilization owes its character to the Sumerians. The successive nations that ruled on this land were the Akkadians, Babylonians, Kassites, Assyrians, and the Chaldeans; they added or enlarged it, but, nevertheless, it was the same character.

POLITICAL STATE

The Mesopotamians were mainly warriors due to the richness of their soil: they were in constant danger from the hostile nations. So they themselves acquired a greed for territory, as well as a fear of losing what they had already gained. They lived in a loose confederation of city-states, united only for military

4 Ibid. P.65

purposes. Each state was ruled by a Patesi, a chief priest who had a command of the military as well as other social functions. Not until 2100 B.C. were the Mesopotamian people united under one single authority. The territory of Mesopotamia reached its largest state in the period of the Assyrians, (1300 - 612 B.C.). It extended as far as the Persian Gulf and to Elam in the East, to the Mediterranean in the West, to the Armenian Mountains in the North and to the Arabian Desert and Egypt in the South.

SOCIAL STATE

Most of the land was divided into large estates held by the rulers, the priests, and the army officers. The average rural citizen was either a tenant farmer or a serf. So the Mesopotamian people came to be excellent farmers producing crops of cereal grains and fruits. Commerce was the second most important source of the nation's wealth. They exchanged metal and timber from North western regions for the agricultural products of the South. Because of its commerce, all the processes of Business were highly developed. Bills, receipts and notes and letters of credits were regularly used.

They were mostly written on clay tablets and then fired for endurance. Bars or ingots of gold and silver were used as means of money.

RELIGION

The Mesopotamians believed in many Gods and ascribed human forms and attributes to their Deities. The importance of the Gods changed from one nation to another even among the cities. However the most popular Gods had remained the same, they were :

Shamash	the sun God
Enlil	Lord of Rain and wind
Enki	God of wisdom who invented handicrafts
Nebu	Lord of vegetation
Ishtar	Goddess of the female principle and of Love
Marduk	God of Creation
Ninkhursag	God of childbirth

The Mesopotamians regarded their Gods and Goddesses as capable of doing evil as well as good. Their religion was exclusively for this world: it offered no hope for a life to come. They thought that the ghost of the dead lingered for a time and then disappeared. No one looked forward to an eternal existence, therefore, they did not

care for the bodies of the dead, or leave many articles, beside the dead. Their Gods were not spiritual, but creatures in human form with human weaknesses and passions. There was no spirituality in their religion, like the uplifting of the soul. The only benefit they had from the Gods was in the form of material gain. Their religion did not carry any standards of morality, and did not put heavy conventions upon people. When the Gods were angry, it was considered to be either a lack of respect or enough offerings donated to them. Their worshipping places were the ziggurats, which were in a ladder form rising up to the sky, in order to facilitate the descent of the Gods to the Earth. They were done in bricks. In the Book of Genesis (XI-19) they were referred to as the " House of the foundation of Earth and Heaven" The rites for the Gods were in the form of magic, consisting of sacrifices, mainly of animals.

ARTS

The Mesopotamians, who had invented the cone mosaic at the time of the Sumerians around 3,000 B.C. and the use of glazed or modeled, ^{brick} contributed greatly to the Mural Art. Beside mural art (which will be dealt with

more precisely later on) they excelled in metal work, gem carving, sculpture and architecture. For mural art sculpture, and architecture clay was the primary material because of the richness of the land in alluvial mud and a lack of wood and stone. However, at the time of the Assyrians sculpting in stone was done.

At the beginning, the theme of Art was mostly of a Sacred nature rather than of Beauty. The first sculptures were rendered in a way of Fantasy: they were unlike anything that could be seen on this world, having a faint resemblance of human bodies with heads of snakes. This may be due to their religion, because no Mesopotamian could have prayed to a statue in which he merely saw an imitation of man. It was in later periods that sculptures of Gods and Deities had a closer resemblance of a human form. Mesopotamian Art excelled in animal sculptures. They were as expressive as the cave paintings or modeled reliefs of animal representations, but the Mesopotamians had added another element to it, this was an aesthetic concern and consciousness of design. The overall aspect of the Mesopotamian Art was grim, due to their religion and constant engagement in wars.

In the later periods of the Mesopotamian civilization, Hugeness became synonymous with Beauty. Everything was rendered in profuse and enourmous dimensions, in order to arouse the admiration for their grandeur rather than try to give an aesthetic pleasure.

INFLUENCE OF THE MESOPOTAMIAN CIVILIZATION ON OTHER NATIONS

Among many of their contributions, we can name some, such as : the seven day week, division of the day into twelve-double hours, belief in horoscopes, twelve signs of the zodiac, the circle of 360 degrees, arithmetical process of multiplication, the cuneiform writing, the law, some aspect of their religion, the use of the arch and the vault. The form of the zig-gurats, which were devices for facilitating the descent of the Gods and also raising the worshippers closer to the sky, can be considered as the ancestors of the minarets on the Islamic mosques.

Their use of cone mosaics in an abstract and geometric way and their two-dimensional decorativeness of clay murals, had become one of the primary decorative elements of the Near Eastern architecture. This influence has passed through the Phoenician, Etruscan, Greek,

Roman, and European cultures to the mural art of the present age. Each successive nation, though has added or changed its theme and improved its technology. The mural art in Mesopotamia had a functional purpose, which was to protect the mud bricks from weathering, but at the same time was rendered in an aesthetic way. Now we shall pass into a more detailed study of the Mesopotamian clay murals.

MURAL ART IN MESOPOTAMIA

The rich natural source of the land, which was clay, had moulded the character of its architecture and art. It was an horizontal architecture opposed with the vertical uprisings of the ziggurats. The main, and perhaps the only element for the architecture was clay. First it was used as a coverant on the straw huts and gradually it took the shape of a brick. Due to the lack of wood for firing bricks were used only sundried, and later on fired bricks were used. The cone mosaic which was invented around 3000 B.C. had a functional purpose. The idea of the cone mosaic might have come as an imitation of rugs which people used to prevent the cold

from coming through walls. By putting hundreds of cone mosaics with red, yellow or black painted heads into the mud plaster, a kind of protective coat had been acquired. These cone mosaics with different paints were put in such a way that a geometric pattern was acquired which gave a pleasant effect to the eyes besides serving a function. As the technology of the brick making and glazes was improved, moulded or glazed bricks came into use instead of cone mosaics, having the same primary job; protecting the walls. The theme of those brick murals were mostly forms of Gods, Goddesses, and animals. The development from plain bricks to glazed and moulded bricks can be divided into 5 periods:

a) The earliest bricks were prepared in wooden rectangular moulds which were open at the bottom and the top. Any soil, preferably one with a greater amount of clay, was mixed with chopped straw and water, and poured into the moulds. After a time, these moulds were removed and the bricks were left to dry. They were mostly large and flat with dimensions of 20x30x3-4 cm.

b) Then from 3200 B.C. onwards, bricks became smaller and were fired in the kilns. However, as it has been

indicated above, due to the lack of wood for firing, sun dried bricks were mostly used. The invention of cone mosaics came into reality around 3000 B.C. They were long pointed cones which had little juttings around their long bodies which prevented them from falling off the walls. They had plain, flat heads which were dipped into red, yellow and black paints. They were mostly 7-8 cm. long. Hundreds of these cones were driven into walls, forming a geometric pattern with their painted heads. Another type of cone mosaic which was used was longer and hollow inside, in order to give a deeper shadow. This shows that the Mesopotamians, while using cone mosaics for functional purposes, did not neglect the aesthetic appearance of them.

c) Another interesting development happened in the shape and method of laying bricks. They were usually referred to as plano-convex. This shape was obtained by piling the clay above the top of the mould and then rounding it off with the hands. The curved upper face of the loaf-shaped form thus obtained, was then indented by prodding with the fingers. These bricks were laid on edge, in rows leaning sideways against each other like books on a shelf; successive rows

were arranged to lean in opposite directions, giving a herring-bone effect, occasionally interrupted by a few courses laid flat to improve the bond.⁶

d) With the Sumerian revival during 2100-1950 B.C., building in bricks reached its zenith. The mud bricks were interrupted at every fifth course by a deep layer of reed matting to prevent shrinkage and uneven settlement. Brick sizes were by now more or less standardized kiln baked bricks measuring 30 cm or more square, and 8 cm. deep.⁷

e) Another form of architectural decoration began to be used in the Assyrian period extensively, which was glazed and modeled bricks. Preliminary drawings of these designs were scratched on large panels of clay which were cut with wire into standard size bricks. The adhesive was bitumen. The glazed murals with relief forms were done in the same manner, after the design was scratched on the clay, it was modeled and then the bricks were fired and glazed separately. A peculiar aspect of some of the murals of the famous Ishtar Gate and the walls of Procession Street, that were done in

6. Charles Singer A History of Technology

Vol. I P.465

7. Ibid. P.467

in the final period of the Chaldeans, was that they were carried down beneath the ground in the exact size and shape that was above ground. Many of the figures in relief that were underground repeated as they were above ground, but the colored glaze was replaced by a protective coat of mud plaster.⁸ This could be due to their religious conceptions. As it has been indicated, a form of magic had entered into the Mesopotamian religion with the Babylonians. By putting these reliefs under the ground, they might have thought of having a more lasting power from the Gods, in case the walls on the surface of the earth might be destroyed. This kind of approach in hiding the reliefs or paintings might have a relationship to the same feeling that the caveman had in rendering their paintings and mouldings: they put their paintings or mouldings on the far and most secret corners or walls in the caves.

The invention of the cone mosaics and the excessive use of the relieved clay murals by the Mesopotamians influenced the Mural Art of many other nations. Mural Art

8 Charles Singer A History of Technology

was then becoming one of the most elementary types of decoration for architecture. The other nations, by taking the idea from Mesopotamia, began making murals in clay according to the materials, religion, and technology of their time. The cone mosaics and the relieved clay bricks gave its place to tiles, tesserae mosaics, free forms or plaques in clay, as the technology of the architecture improved.

Among many murals done with the use of clay, in Mesopotamia, few had been able to survive up to our age, however with new excavations many others may be brought to daylight. Among the surviving examples we shall show some.

Picture 5

Finest examples of cone mosaics were found at the cities of Uruk, Ur and Lagash. This picture shows the cone mosaics on the wall at the city of Uruk, 3000 B.c.

Picture 6

Shows cone mosaics on a column at the same building, which picture 5 shows.

Picture 7

Unglazed brick mural, showing Gods and Goddesses with flowing vase, which has a symbolic meaning for the Mesopotamians: the fertilizer. The vertical wavy lines on the lower part of the form symbolizes the water, thus the rivers. The plain vertical bricks with rounder tops symbolizes the mountains. In this case the God which had been represented here might be the Lord of waters and mountains: God Enki. This wall is at the Temple Karaindash at Uruk, done around 1500 B.C.

Picture 8

Shows unglazed brick mural, representing a Bull-God and a Goddess with a palm tree, Susa 1200 B.C.

Picture 9

Glazed brick mural, representing a Bull on the Ishtar Gate, Babylon, 600 B.C. The background is in blue colors and the glaze on the bull is yellow and greenish colors.

Picture 10

Picture 10

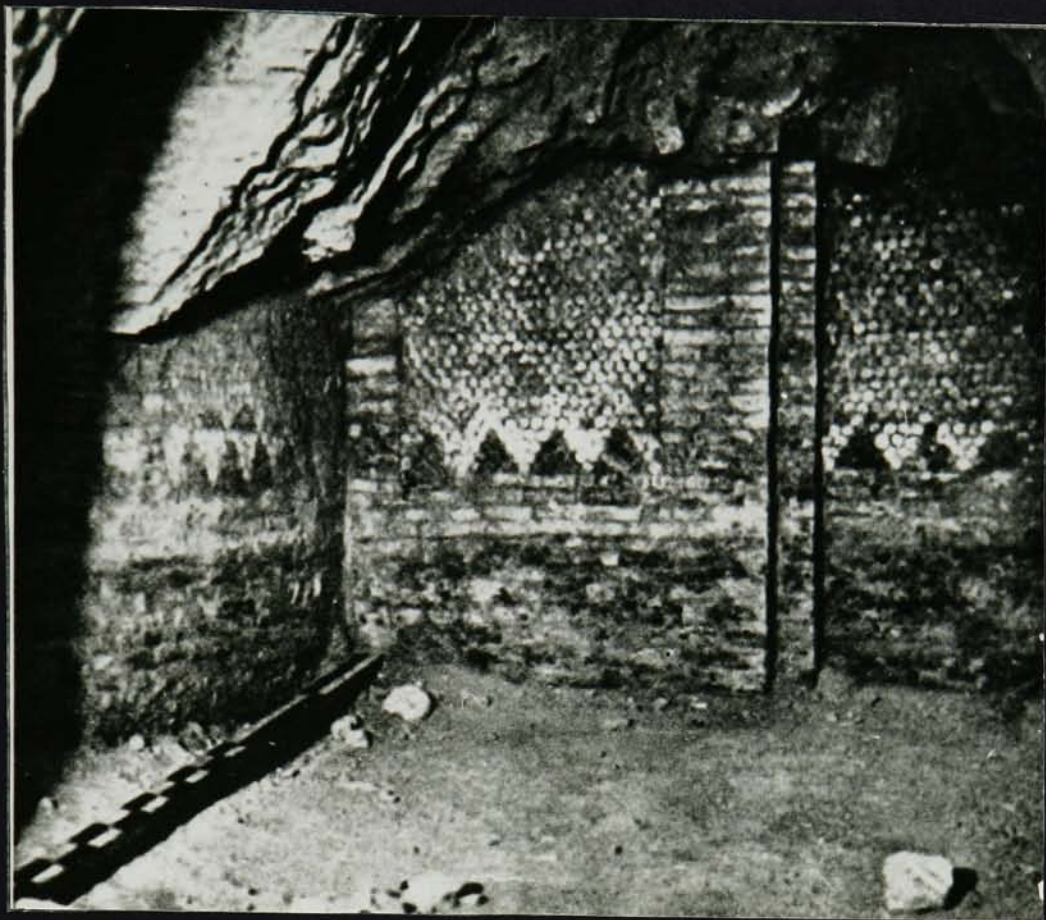
Shows a glazed brick mural representing a Lion on the Sacred Way leading to the Ziggurat, Babylon, 600 B.C. The colors are reddish yellow and white on a blue background.

Picture 11

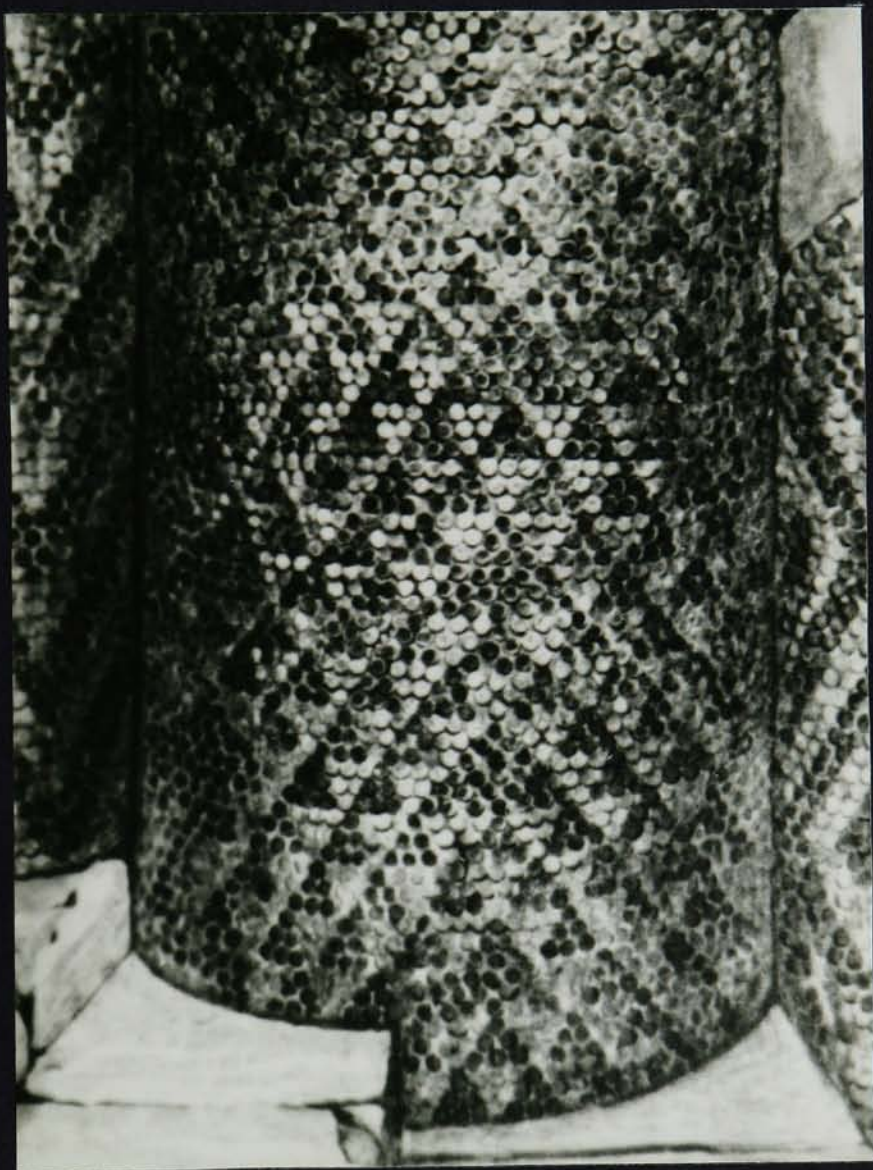
Shows a Dragon on the Ishtar Gate, with yellow and green colors on a blue background, Babylon, 600 B.C.

Picture 12

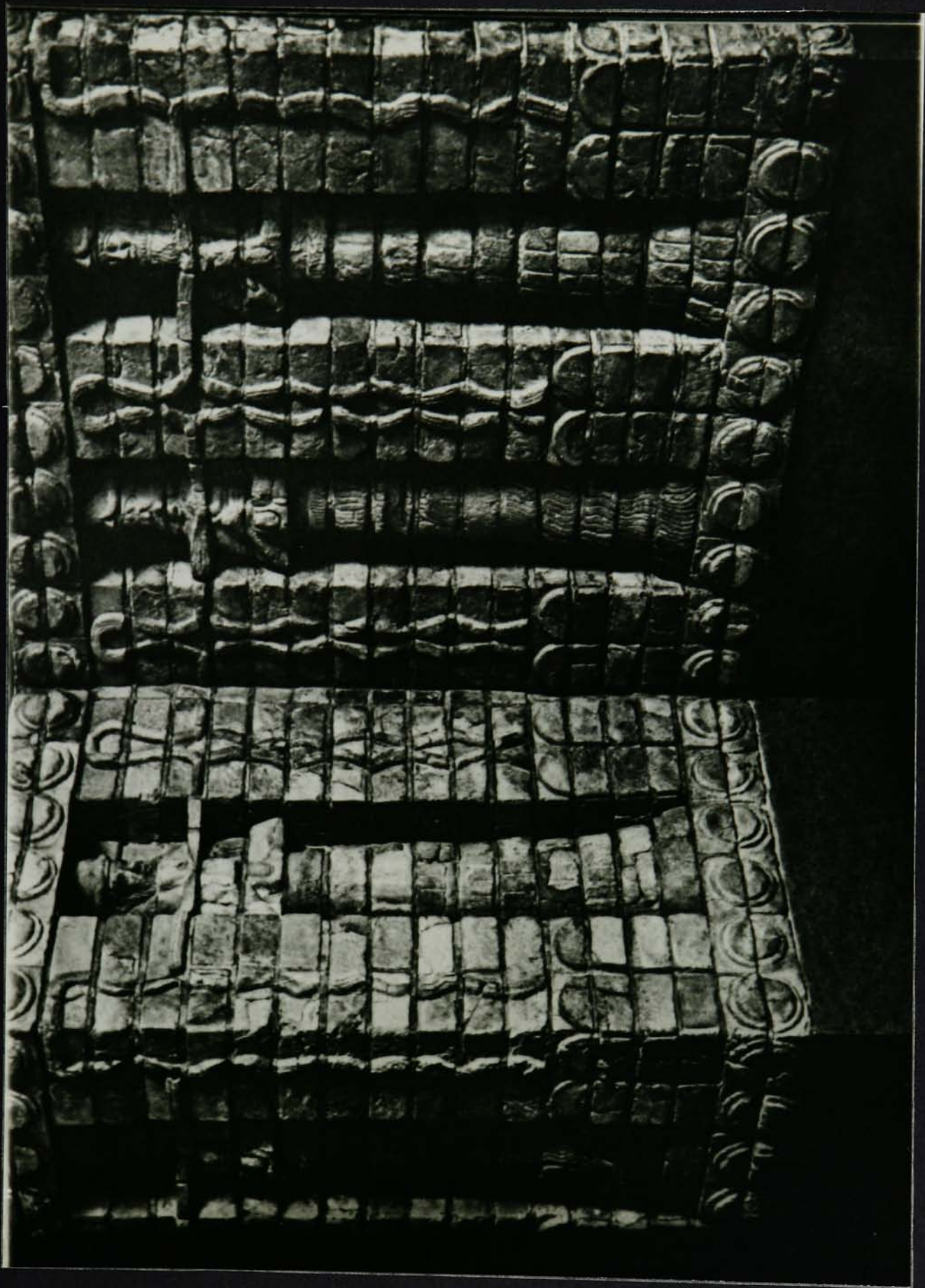
Show the Ishtar Gate, Babylon, 600 B.C. with relieved glazed brick murals representing bulls and dragons.



Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9



Picture 10



Picture 11



Picture 12

PART III

CERAMIC MURALS IN THE UNITED STATES AT THE PRESENT

AGE

History of the United States

The short title given to this great Federal Republic had its origin in the revolt of the British colonies in North America, when in the Declaration of Independence, they described themselves as " The Thirteen United States of America ". So the name United States (used as a singular) has become accepted as the name of this country, and its citizens are called " Americans " ⁹

The native occupants of the North America were red Indians, who were comparatively few in number, and except in Mexico, were not advanced beyond the savage state. The History of the United States goes as far back as to 1492 A.D., when Columbus discovered the New World, which he believed was the Orient. Although he was wrong in his judgement, he had aroused the interest and convinced the Europeans that the wealth of the Orient could be reached by crossing the

Atlantic Ocean. It was Americus Vesputius, a florentine businessman and voyager, who had realized for the first time, that what Columbus had discovered was not the Orient but an Unknown land. So the name America took its source from Americus Vesputius.

These explorations and discoveries immediately aroused the interest of the European nations who were searching for means of profit. So the colonization and settlements began in America. First the Spanish, then the French came and settled in the southern regions of America. It was in 1607 that the first permanent settlement of the British took place, in Virginia. Then the famous " Mayflower " carrying pilgrims from England, who were searching independence in worshipping God, arrived at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620. And thereafter, these transeoceanic invasions by the leading people of the Occidental Old World, progressed slowly through the 17th and 18th Centuries.

Most of the early settlers, who came to America for political, economical or religious reasons had no special training in colonization. But their members

had the elemental qualities of courage, resourcefulness and co-operativeness and worked themselves out through wilderness. The first settlement areas were areas were along the Atlantic seaboard and the Southern regions, but when steam transportation on sea and land replaced the sailing vessels and wagons, the frontier was swiftly carried to the Central plains and to the far West. The opening of the Erie Canal and the wealthy natural mineral resources that were found in the West, played a great role in this quick Western expansion.

As years passed by, the settlers, growing in number, in power, in economics and in culture, began to break off from their motherland and wished to be integrated more by themselves. The heavy taxes by the British and other political disturbances between them and the British, gave way to the Wars of Independence, ending in favor of the Colonists, who freed themselves from British power and declared themselves as " The Thirteen United States of America" in 1776. After this event, more states entered into the union and the territory of those integrated states began to enlarge.

MURAL ART IN THE COLONIAL DAYS

In the colonial days, we do not find great mural works due to the struggle of settling, the conquering of the wild regions, and the poor economic conditions. Whatever we do find are repetitions of their former European Art. This is because people do not alter their ways of Life upon emigrating, but rather conduct their affairs and their culture in much the same manner as they had done in their homelands. However the brick and tile works in the colonial days can enter into our subject, since the definition of a mural, in its simpler form, is a treatment of a wall.

Clay was found in many regions, so each town or village had some source of it, around or in the nearby communities, which they moulded by hand, into a brick shape, dried and fired them. The first buildings were made of bricks, so whatever had been made was used for those buildings. After serving the primary functional purpose people began to use bricks in such a way so

that an aesthetic appearance was achieved. The use of bricks for aesthetic reasons were done by arranging them in a pattern, mostly geometric, as seen on the facades of the buildings. They were either glazed or not glazed. These patterns were called English or Dutch, since it had been made by the colonists who followed the rules and regulations practised in their mother countries. Beside these patterns on the facades, we also see moulded and glazed bricks, of flower or geometric designs, forming a border around the houses. Also bigger plaques of different designs were used outside of the buildings. The brick decoration on the inside walls of the houses were mostly used around the fireplaces.

Tiles, which could be considered the next early wall decorations after bricks, were then used with various designs in many places. Among the early colonists, it was the German settlers, who came to America after 1683, and settled in the Pennsylvania state, who produced many interesting tiles, mostly around the the 17th and 18th Centuries. These German settlers,

who left their country and were away from the improvements that were done in their homelands, carried on the tile decorations in simple folkloric manner. The paintings on those tiles were mostly of people, flowers and animals.

IMPORTANT EVENTS DURING 19th CENTURY

While the arrangements of the bricks and the tile decorations on the walls were carried on in the same manner, many important events took place which changed and gave a more decisive path to American History. Among many of them we shall cite few. One important event was the invention of the cotton gin by Eli Whitney and then the first opening of a textile factory in Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1815. These inventions helped to further the importance of industry into American life. Beside the quick improvements of machines and an uprising number of factories, the second war with the British freed the Americans from importing foreign goods. This event increased American production of goods.

Another important factor was the awakening of the intellectuals in the middle years of the 19th Century. It could be named as the American Renaissance, when men with high intellect, concern and responsibility began to give shape to the American mind. Among these highly intellectual people were Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Benjamin Franklin, presidents Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson. Their voice awakened the people to the importance of Democracy, individualism, and to the freedom of thought. Beside those intellectuals, artists who used to go to Europe for further education, began to paint their own country, cities and people, perhaps with the same technique, but, with an individual touch.

After the Civil War of 1861-1865, America plunged into an uprising history. Successive inventions in Technology and Science took place.

MURAL WORKS IN THE BEGINNING OF THE 20th CENTURY

In the beginning of the 20th Century we see some revivals in the tile works. From 1848 onwards, we see ornamental tiles made in factories. Among these factories we can name a few, such as, Bennington Pottery, Star Encaustic Tile Company, and Low Art Tile Company. In fact John G. Low is now considered the pioneer of modern glazed and artistic tile work. From 1879 onwards the tile industry was well established in the United States. At the beginning of the 20th Century, Moravian Pottery and Tile Work, at Doylestown, Pennsylvania, began producing hand-made tiles. These tiles can be found all over the United States in churches, in schools, and in public and private houses. The themes of these tiles were old stories from the Bible and from native or foreign Literature. Interesting examples of these tile works can also be found on the walls of stations, such as at the South Ferry Station and Columbus Circle.¹⁰

As it could be understood from the above statements tile works were done mostly in the factories by either mass production or for personal consignments. The impor-

tance of the mural work came rather late to the United States. Till the end of the 19th Century, architects were piling ornamentation on their buildings, but the advent of modern concrete and steel construction changed the architectural concepts, leaving the ornaments out of the buildings. "Ornamentation became anathema to architects, who wanted their buildings as plain as possible".¹¹ Also the depression years of the 1930's and the war years of 1940's brought a decline in building construction. The art of ornament was among the first to be cut to save the costs.

The change of architectural concepts and the difficult times of the 30's and 40's, pushed the artists to their lonely studios. It did not change the idea of painting, but the idea of mural art had undergone a change. Artists who wanted to do murals, but having no special walls, began to work on small sizes and the murals became something like paintings, a work of art to be hung on a wall. However, the Government, sensing the growing gap between artists and architects, tried to bring them together. This resulted in the "Public Works

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of Art Project " coming into reality in 1933. This project, by paying salaries to the artists and allowing them to work in their own medium, and also by using their works in the adornment of the Public buildings, brought the artists into contact with the architects and the public. When this project was closed, a permanent section in the Treasury Department was established, which encouraged the artists and initiated a series of competitions for the Federal Buildings.

Beside the Government's efforts to bring Art into the light, a series of exhibitions played a great role for the awakening in the Fields of Art, such as " The World's Fair" in 1893, in Chicago, which stimulated mural painting and brought work to American painters sculptors. The Armory Show in 1913, in New York, gave more chances to the artists and also to the public to see the modern trends in Arts that were being done in Europe. Other fairs like the Century of Progress Exposition in 1933 in Chicago, the World's Fair in New York in 1939-40 and the Golden Gate Centennial in San Francisco, also played a great role in the

fields of Art.

Besides ideas that were pouring into America from Europe, an interest of earlier civilizations had taken place. The interest in Mayan Art, Mexican Art, especially Mexican mural art, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese Art began to creep in. Architects becoming confident of their building techniques, began to reappraise the place of Art in their buildings, also American men and women, who had their necessities already provided by the machines, began searching for that extra thing "the Humanized Product". So handcraft culture began to grow vigorously within this powerful industrial society.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AMERICAN ARTISTS TODAY

American artists are intellectuals who are products of Universities, lacking a folk tradition. They are a melting pot of many national origins. They are aware of all ideas of the past and of the present.

Due to transportation and publication, trends of national arts have diminished and left itself to individualistic arts. The artists in America are individuals who are trying to find new aesthetic solutions to their work. This is easier for American artists since they do not have heavy conventions of traditions to be bound with. In the olden days, it usually took several years to be a master in one field, but the artists of today try several media simultaneously, and try to expand the boundaries and put more freedom to their works. Also, the influence of the Zen pottery and of modern painting stressed the idea of spontaneity opposing the rigidity of the old ideas.

The Arts today are independent and nonintegrated but they are prepared to serve and complement each other. The basis of this relationship is opposition and not integration.¹² The idea of permanence, as it was in Egypt, and the stress of religious concepts as it was in old days have been changed. No buildings or churches are built today for the purpose of eternity or for showing the glory of their kings, or relating the

stories from the Bible.

Architecture has been reduced to the minimum essentials, becoming self sufficient, expressing new ideas of aesthetic values or technological improvements, while serving the immediate purpose of housing people. As ideas change, the old houses are brought down and new ones are erected in their places. The pace of living is heightened and people are on the move.

The conclusion drawn from present day murals may be revealed by quoting Einstein's remark " a perfection of mean, but a confusion of aims" marks the state of our time. When we look back into prehistoric times, we see the primitive artists at ease with his society, in close relation with his magical religion, and in command of his materials. Whether the clay mouldings or cave paintings were the results of religious or practical reason, the primitive artist was capable in holding a mirror to the essential feelings, thought, and state of his time. When we looked back into the Mesopotamian civilization, we again discover that the

artist was in the same condition. They all represented and gave the most important aspects of their culture. We also discover clay murals were in close relation with the architecture of their times. The ziggurats which were built as a ladder to facilitate the descent of their Gods and as a house for worshipping, had been adorned with clay murals which clarifies the idea by its representational figures of Gods and religious stories. Palaces which were built for the sovereign had been again adorned by clay murals showing the grandeur and the deeds of their sovereign. These murals were carried with the most characteristic material of their lands: clay.

When the idea of murals shifted into other countries, we see the same basic character: rendering works of Art which goes hand in hand with, and puts mirror to, their cultures. In Asia Minor, where religion had forbidden representational for, the became decorative. The religious places, palaces, and private houses were then decorated with tiles of decorative quality. Beside their aesthetic aspect, they went hand in hand with

architecture, by controlling the cold and hot weather, and by diffusing the light which entered through small windows and reflected onto the glazed tiles, and illuminated the interiors of the buildings. So the idea of murals, whether of clay or of other materials, in other countries worked their way in the same manner.

At our age, due to Science and mechanization, we have at our command every material that we can demand. This is not the only change. The pace of our living, the structure of our societies, and our aesthetic values have all undergone a change. Now let us examine those changes one by one:

a) Due to the facilities of transportation, we do not stay at one place like in the olden days, when travelling was difficult, dangerous and long. For us a country in Europe is as near as a town in our neighbourhood. We do not possess long enough, as an individual, to stamp our character on it or to have murals made on our walls.

b) Artists today are no longer a group of people working for one idea, like in the olden days. We are individualistic; most of the time we carry a project by ourselves from the beginning to the end, or else with very little help. This effects the end price of his work and make it expensive. •

c) In the olden days, when labor was cheap or next to nothing, it was inexpensive to build monumental murals. But nowadays, labor is very expensive. It costs too much money. Art work comes into the building after it is finished or nearly finished, according to how much money is left or could be afforded. In fact, the United States Government has agreed on 1% of the actual cost of a building to be put into the works of Art. This effects the works of Art in many ways. First of all, the artist comes to the building in its later stage of development. He is not in close contact with the philosophy of the architect. He has a given place where he is going to put his work. The artist does not have a chance to express his feelings about where his mural will be placed.

c) The concept of Architecture has undergone a great change. In olden days there were one or two exceptionally genius architects who became the chief architects of the country at that time. They had many artists or chief craftsmen working under guidance to execute the buildings. But, at present, a genius architect is a man who wants to design the buildings up to its minor points. Examples of this would be Le Corbusier, Frank L. Wright, Nervi, Gaudi and many others. The architecture is not an ornamented building any more: it is more or less a sculpture. The technological improvements enabled architects to carry out very complex ideas. In ancient times, the cone mosaics, tiles, ornamented columns or other ornamental things all had functional purposes, such as protection against weather or for support or distribute the weight, but now there is no necessity for this. Architecture became sufficient in itself without the help of ornamentation, even becoming an anathema. Mies Van Der Rohe's remark "Less is more" became an accepted approach in architecture.

All these changes effected the mode, the manner, the design, the theme, and the technique of the present day murals. Since they have no functional purpose, they have become an ornamentation which is added afterwards to the buildings. The sizes of the murals became smaller, and sometimes it is hard to separate a mural from an easel painting. However the size of the mural does not effect its quality, if it adds something to the building. Though, it seems to the writer, that muralists should come to the building at an earlier stage, so that the architect and the artist understand each other's ideas and purposes, and through this understanding, murals of monumental quality, showing the philosophy, the technology and the feelings of the period, the society and the individuals, will be moulded into reality.

EXAMPLES OF THE CERAMIC MURALS IN THE UNITED STATES

The United States is a very large country where thousands of artists are working in clay or in other medias. In order to give an exact mirror of the present clay murals, a longer time and a good deal of travelling ,

is necessary. However, we shall choose some of the murals with different characteristics and techniques, in order to give an overall aspect.

a) Mosaic murals:

These are done by putting together small pieces of clay of different colors and textures, according to the artist's design. The clay mosaics can be bought from the factories or can be made by hand by simply cutting the clay plaques into regular or irregular shapes. Small pieces of other materials are also used among the clay mosaics for an effect. The theme of these mosaic murals re representational or abstract according to the artist.

b) Figger plaques:

These are made by putting the design over a flat piece of clay, and then tracing the design on to the clay. Then the pieces are cut. The pieces may remain flat or small pieces of clay may be added to it for texture, then they are fired, they may be glazed or not glazed.

c) Moulded Murals:

These can be either small moulded murals attached to the wall or a bigger size covering the whole wall. They can be moulded and carved or they can be moulded and used as mould to pour the actual piece.

d) Free forms:

Irregular shapes of clay attached to each other according to the design, to give a kind of abstract relief.

The following pictures will show of some of the well known artists' murals done in clay, glazed or not glazed. They will give a better idea of the state of the murals than words.

Picture 13

Ceramic mural by Olin Russum at the Jewish Community Center, Baltimore, Maryland.

Picture 14

Clay mural enriched with puddle glazes, done by

Secrest Brothers, at Midtown Plaza, Rochester, New York.

Picture 15

A moulded panel in clay by Rudy Autio.

Picture 16

Three ceramic murals by Rudy Autio.

Picture 17

A ceramic mural by John Mason.

Picture 18

Detail of the above mural.

Picture 19

Three ceramic murals in free forms done by John Mason

Picture 20

A ceramic mural by John Mason

Picture 21

A ceramic mural by John Mason.

Picture 22

Four panel in clay by John Mason

Picture 23

A ceramic panel by Frans Wildenhain

Picture 24

Detail of the above panel.

Picture 25

A partial view of '110' x 14' ceramic wall of the Strassenburgh Laboratories, Rochester, New York, done by Frans Wildenhain.

Picture 26

A partial view of the 208 foot long ceramic mural for the National Library of Medicine, Bethesda, Maryland, done by Frans Wildenhain.

Picture 13



Picture 14



Picture 15



Picture 16



Picture 17



Picture 18



Picture 19



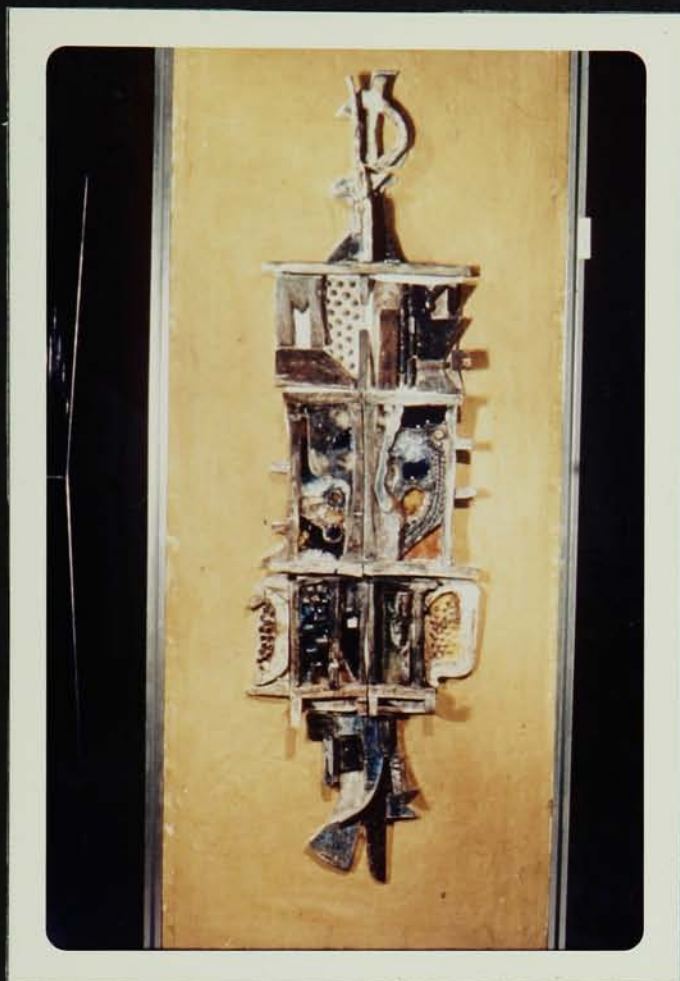
Picture 20



Picture 21



Picture 22



Picture 23



Picture 24



Picture 25



Picture 26

CONCLUSION

This Thesis, which is a brief outlook into the cremaic murals done in prehistoric times, in Mesopotamia and in the United States, has been written with the hope of arousing interest among future readers, and of establishing material for further studies. A study of this kind, like any other study, is not an ultimate end in itself, but rather an assemblage of studies, perceptions and thought, and the beginning for further studies.

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